

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 004118

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/03/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#) [SA](#)

SUBJECT: IRAQI SHIA DON'T THINK MUCH OF SAUDI FOREIGN
MINISTER'S REMARKS

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT FORD FOR REASONS
1.4 (B) AND (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: Recent comments by the Saudi Arabian
Minister of Foreign Affairs, combined with the Arab League
Secretary General's decision to travel to Iraq, have raised

SIPDIS

the ire of many Iraqi Shia. They expressed anger at
assertions that Iran has undue influence in Iraq, and they
are unhappy with comments from neighboring Arab states that
the Shia have too much influence; they perceive that as
interference on behalf of the Sunni Arabs. Ambassador
Khalilzad's recent trip to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, however,
has received positive coverage in the Shia media, with the
Ambassador portrayed as a defender of the Shia. END
SUMMARY.

2. (C) Comments by Saudi Arabian Minister of Foreign
Affairs, Saud al-Faisal, that the U.S. used Iraqi Shia to
hand control of Iraq to Iran, angered many Iraqis. Iraqi
Interior Minister Bayan Jabr responded to the comments by
saying that Iraq needed no lessons on democracy from the
"Bedouin camel herders" in Saudi Arabia. He added that
Shia in Saudi Arabia suffer more than the Shia in Iraq
because of Saudi Arabia's stratified social system, with
King Faisal's family at the top, the Ismaili Muslims
underneath them, and the Shia on the bottom. The Iraqi
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hoshyar Zebari, has apologized
for these comments, but many Iraqi Shia of all stripes
support Minister Jabr and do not feel an apology should
have been issued. Prominent Shia imam and parliamentarian
Jalal ad-Din as-Saghayr told PolCouns that the Saudis
should stay out of Iraq's business. National Security
Advisor Muwaffak Rubai'e was similarly visibly unhappy with
Faisal's remarks over dinner with the Ambassador October 1.

3. (C) News about possible travel by Arab League Secretary
General Amru Musa to Iraq to mediate the constitution
process is seen by many Iraqi Shia as anathema. The Arab
League is viewed as a pro-Sunni organization, and Secretary
General Musa is widely disliked among Iraqi Shia. He is
considered to be close to the Iraqi insurgency, and has
even met with Dr. Harith Sulayman al Dari, head of the
hard-line Sunni Arab Association of Muslim Scholars. In an
October 3 meeting with PolCouns, TNA Constitution Drafting
Committee chair Haman Hamoudi asked how Musa could possibly
help finalize the constitution. Hamoudi was deeply
suspicious of Musa's motives.

4. (C) In contrast, the Iraqi Shia media has applauded
Ambassador Khalilzad's visit to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The
October 4 edition of the newspaper Al-Bayyna, for example,
reports that Ambassador went to Saudi Arabia to ask them to
pressure the Arab League into normalizing relations with
Iraq. According to Al-Bayyna, Khalilzad warned the Saudis
not to involve themselves in Iraq's political process. He
also told them not to threaten the Shia in eastern Saudi
Arabia, who numbers 4 million. This press coverage
contrasted with questions from suspicious parliamentarians
we fielded on October 3 about the trip. Hamudi and
as-Saghayr,
for example, questioned us carefully about the Ambassador's
trip.

5. (C) COMMENT: These events highlight the sectarian
differences that plague Iraqi society. There is enormous
mistrust among the various ethnic groups, with the Sunni
Arabs and Shia both willing to accuse each other of
collaboration with foreign powers. We need to keep these
sensitivities in mind as we ponder how Arab states might be
able to help stabilize Iraq. END COMMENT.
Khalilzad